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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

*To be continued every* THURSDAY.

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IT gives me great pleaſure that I am able in this day's paper to congratulate the polite part of my fellow ſubjects of both ſexes, upon the ſplendid revival of that moſt rational entertainment, an Italian opera. Of late years it had ſeemed to ſicken, ſo that I greatly feared that the unſucceſsful efforts which it made from time to time, were it's convulſive and expiring pangs. But it now appears, and indeed much to the honour of this country, that we have ſtill too many protectors and protectreſſes of the liberal arts, to ſuffer that of muſic, the moſt liberal of them all, to ſink for want of due encouragement.

I AM ſenſible that Italian opera's have frequently been the objects of the ridicule of many of our greateſt wits; and, viewed in one light only, perhaps not without ſome reaſon. But as I conſider all public diverſions ſingly with

with regard to the effects which they may have upon the morals and manners of the public, I confeſs I reſpect the Italian opera's, as the moſt innocent of any.

The ſevere monſieur Boileau juſtly condemns the French opera's, the moral of which he calls

*——————Morale lubrique*
*Que Lully réchauffa des ſons de ſa muſique.*

But then it muſt be conſidered that French opera's are always in French, and conſequently may be underſtood by many French people; and that they are fine dramatic tragedies, adorned with all the graces of poetry and harmony of ſounds, and may probably inſpire too tender, if not voluptuous ſentiments. Can the Italian opera be accuſed of any thing of this kind? Certainly not. Were, what is called, the poetry of it intelligible in itſelf, it would not be underſtood by one in fifty of a Britiſh audience; but I believe that even an Italian of common candor will confeſs, that he does not underſtand one word of it. It is not the intention of the thing: for ſhould the ingenious author of the words, by miſtake, put any meaning into them, he would to a certain degree check and cramp the genius of the compoſer of the muſic, who perhaps might think himſelf obliged to adapt his ſounds to the ſenſe; whereas now he is at liberty to ſcatter indiſcriminately, among his kings, queens, heroes and heroines, his ADAGIO's, his ALLEGRO's, his PATHETICS, his CHROMATICS and his JIGGS. It would alſo have been a reſtraint upon the actors and actreſſes, who might poſſibly have attempted to form their action upon the meaning of their parts; but as it is, if they do but ſeem, by turns, to be angry and ſorry in the two firſt acts, and very merry in the laſt ſcene of the laſt, they are ſure to meet with their deſerved applauſe.

SIGNOR

SIGNOR Metaſtaſio attempted ſome time ago a very dangerous innovation. He tried gently to throw ſome ſenſe into his opera's; but it did not take; the conſequences were obvious, and nobody knew where they would ſtop.

THE whole ſkill and judgment of the poet now conſiſts in ſelecting about a hundred words (for the opera vocabulary does not exceed that number) that terminate in liquids and vowels, and rhyme to each other. Theſe words excite ideas in the hearer, though they were not the reſult of any in the poet. Thus the word *tortorella*, ſtretched out to a quaver of a quarter of an hour, excites in us the idea of tender and faithful love; but if it is ſucceeded by *navicella*, that ſoothing idea gives way to the boiſterous and horrid one of a ſkiff (that is a heart) toſſed by the winds and waves upon the main ocean of love. The handcuffs and fetters in which the hero commonly appears at the end of the ſecond, or the beginning of the third act, indicate captivity; and when properly jingled to a pathetic piece of recitativo upon *queſti ceppi*, are really very moving, and inſpire a love of liberty. Can any thing be more innocent, or more moral than this muſical Pantomime, in which there is not one indecent word or action, but where, on the contrary, the moſt generous ſentiments are (however imperfectly) pointed out and inculcated?

I WAS once indeed afraid that the licentiouſneſs of the times had infected even the opera: for in that of Alexander, the hero going into the heroine's apartment, found her taking a nap in an eaſy chair. Tempted by ſo much beauty, and invited by ſo favourable an opportunity, he gently approached, and *ſtole a pair of gloves*. I confeſs I dreaded the conſequences of this bold ſtep; and the more ſo, as it was taken by the celebrated ſignor Seneſino. But all went off very well; for the hero

contented

contented himſelf with giving the good company a ſong, in which he declared that the lips he had juſt kiſſed were a couple of rubies.

ANOTHER good effect of the Italian opera's, is, that they contribute extremely to the keeping of good hours; the whole audience (though paſſionately fond of muſic) being ſo tired before they are half, and ſo ſleepy before they are quite done, that they make the beſt of their way home, too drowzy to enter upon freſh pleaſures that night.

HAVING thus reſcued theſe excellent muſical drama's from the unjuſt ridicule which ſome people of vulgar and illiberal taſtes have endeavoured to throw upon them, I muſt proceed and do juſtice to the VIRTUOSO's and VIRTUOSA's who perform them. But I believe it will be neceſſary for me to premiſe, for the ſake of many of my Engliſh readers, that VIRTÙ among the modern Italians, ſignifies nothing leſs than what VIRTUS did among the antient ones, or what VIRTUE ſignifies among us; on the contrary, I might ſay that it ſignifies almoſt every thing elſe. Conſequently thoſe reſpectable titles of VIRTUOSO and VIRTUOSA have not the leaſt relation to the moral characters of the parties. They mean only that thoſe perſons (endowed, ſome by nature, and ſome by art, with good voices) have from their infancy devoted their time and labour to the various combinations of ſeven notes: a ſtudy that muſt unqueſtionably have formed their minds, enlarged their notions, and have rendered them moſt agreable and inſtructive companions; and as ſuch, I obſerve that they are juſtly ſolicited, received and cheriſhed by people of the firſt diſtinction.

As theſe illuſtrious perſonages come over here with no ſordid view of profit, but merely, *per far piacer a la nobilita Ingleſe*, that is, to oblige the Engliſh nobility, they are exceedingly good and condeſcending to ſuch of the

ſaid

ſaid Engliſh nobility, and even gentry, as are deſirous to contract an intimacy with them. They will, for a word's ſpeaking, dine, ſup, or paſs the whole day with people of a certain condition, and perhaps ſing or play, if civilly requeſted. Nay, I have known many of them ſo good, as to paſs two or three months of the ſummer, at the country ſeats of ſome of their noble friends, and thereby mitigate the horrors of the country and the manſion houſe, to my lady and her daughters. I have been aſſured by many of their chief patrons and patroneſſes, that they are all *the beſt creatures in the world*, and from the time of ſignor Cavaliero Nicolini down to this day, I have conſtantly heard the ſeveral great performers, ſuch as Farinelli, Careſtini, Monticelli, Gaffarielli, as well as the ſignore Cuzzoni, Fauſtina, &c. much more praiſed for their affability, the gentleneſs of their manners, and all the good qualities of the head and the heart, than for either their muſical ſkill or execution. I have even known theſe their ſocial virtues lay their protectors and protectreſſes under great difficulties how to reward ſuch diſtinguiſhed merit. But benefit nights luckily came to their aſſiſtance, and gave them an opportunity of inſinuating, with all due regard, into the hand of the performer, in lieu of a ticket, a conſiderable bank-bill, a gold ſnuff-box, a diamond ring, or ſome ſuch trifle. It is to be hoped that the illuſtrious ſignor Farinelli has not yet forgot the many inſtances he experienced of Britiſh munificence; for it is certain that many private families *ſtill remember them.*

All this is very well; and I greatly approve of it, as I am of tolerating and naturalizing principles. But however, as the beſt things may admit of improvement by certain modifications, I ſhall now ſuggeſt two; the one of a public, the other of a private nature. I would by all